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FITZPATRICK CELLA HARPER & SCINTO 30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK, NY 10112			PHAM, THIERRY L	
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/769,466	MATSUDA, HIROSHI	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Thierry L. Pham	2624	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 12 September 2005.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-97 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1-97 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

- This action is responsive to the following communication: RCE filed on 9/12/05.
- Claims 1-97 are pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Kayano et al (US 5812747).

Regarding claim 1, Kanayo discloses an image output control apparatus (master copy machine 1, fig. 4) connected to plural image output devices (copy machines 1-2, fig. 4) through communication media (cable 80, fig. 4), capable of controlling to output images of predetermined input data using the plural image output devices, comprising:

- mode select means (control panel as shown in fig. 3) for selecting an cascade outputting mode (cascade mode, col. 4, lines 45-56) so that output processing of the input data is allotted to the plural image output devices (col. 4, lines 45-60 and col. 5, lines 58-67);
- selection means (control panel as shown in fig. 3) for selecting the plural image output devices (col. 5, lines 58-67) that should be used in the allotted outputting mode;

- obtaining means (CPU 27 of master copy machine, fig. 2) for obtaining output media information (output media information from plurality of copy machines in cascade mode, fig. 11) stored in each the image output device of the plural image output devices that are selected to be used in the allotted outputting mode;
- judgment means (CPU 27 of master copy machine, fig. 2) judging whether or not the plural image output devices selected to be used in the allotted outputting mode store the same-sized output media (size output media, fig. 11, col. 7, lines 50 to col. 8, lines 20) on the basis of the output media information obtained by said obtaining means; and
- notification means (fig. 9, col. 6, lines 30-67) for notifying of a judgment result obtained by said judgment means.

Regarding claim 2, Kanayo further discloses an apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a display means (control panel display, fig. 3) for displaying information regarding the image output devices, and said notification means displays a warning message (step U105, fig. 9) on the display when said judgment means judged that the plural image output devices selected by said selection means do not have the same-sized output media (slave machine has malfunction such as paper emptied, fig. 7 & 11).

Regarding claim 3, Kanayo further discloses an apparatus according to claim 2, wherein it is controlled to cancel selection (Cancel Button 56, fig. 3) to be executed by said selection means when said judgment means judged that the plural image output devices selected by said selection means do not have the same-sized output media.

Regarding claim 4, Kanayo further discloses an apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said judgment means judges whether or not the plural image output devices selected by said selection means have the same-sized and the same-kind output media (paper media information, figs. 7 & 11) on the basis of the output media information.

Regarding claim 5, Kanayo further discloses an apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising a display for displaying information regarding the image output devices, and said notification means displays a warning message (step U105, fig. 9) on the display when said judgment means judged that the plural image output devices selected by said selection means do not have the same-sized and the same-kind output media.

Regarding claim 6, Kanayo further discloses an apparatus according to claim 5, wherein it is controlled to cancel selection (CANCEL button, 3) to be executed by said selection means when said judgment means judged that the plural image output devices selected by said selection means do not have the same-sized and the same-kind output media.

Regarding claim 7, Kanayo further discloses an apparatus according to of claim 1, further comprising input means for inputting image data obtained by reading originals, and it is possible to control that the plural image output devices (slave copy machines 2-3, fig. 4) can output images of image data inputted by said input means.

Regarding claims 8-14: Claims 8-14 are the method claims corresponding to the apparatus claims 1-7 (respectively). The method claims are inherent and included by the operation of the apparatus claims. Please see claims rejection basis/rationale as described in claims 1-7 above.

Regarding claim 15: Claim 15 corresponds to claims 1-7 and/or combination thereof except computer readable memory medium for storing program is claimed rather than printing system or data output apparatus. All computers have some type of computer readable memory medium for storing computer program, hence claim 15 would be rejected using the same rationale as in claims 1-7 and/or combination thereof.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 16-97 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kayano et al (US 5812747), and in view of Okutsu (US 5630062).

Regarding claim 16, Kayano discloses an image output system (fig. 4) comprising:

- plural image output devices (copy machines 1-3, fig. 4);
- each of said plural image output devices comprising:
 - a memory unit (image memory unit C, fig. 2) adapted to store a plurality of data;
 - a printer unit (laser printing unit 25, fig. 1) adapted to perform print processing of data stored in said memory unit to an output medium;
 - an acceptor (control panel, fig. 3) adapted to accept an instruction for causing a local device and another image output device to start a cascade printing operation (cascade mode, col. 4, lines 45-56) that print processing of a series of data is able to allot to said local device and said other image output device (col. 4, lines 45-60 and col. 5, lines 58-67), from a user; and
 - a controller (control unit 26, fig. 1, col. 4, lines 45-67) to permit an execution of the cascade printing operation in said local device and said other image output device (master machine 1 and other slave machines 2-3, fig. 4, col. 7, lines 13-67), according to the instruction from the user, when the same output medium (media output size, fig. 5 & 11, col. 7, lines 50 to col. 8, lines 20) is set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

However, Kayano fails to teach and/or suggest a controller inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in each of said local device and said other image output device, before the instruction from the user is

accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

Okutsu, in the same field of endeavor for cascade printing operation (image output system), teaches a controller inhibits an execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67 and fig. 16) of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in each of said local device and said other image output device (printers a-c, fig. 1), before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify image output device of Kayano to include a controller for inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in said local device and other image output device as taught by Okutsu because of a following reason: (●) to ensure entire print job will be printed on the same output medium for output quality enhancement.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to combine Kayano with Okutsu to obtain the invention as specified in claim 16.

Regarding claim 17, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein said controller inhibits (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) said execution of said allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling beforehand said acceptor so as not to accept the instruction from the user, when the same output medium (different print medias, fig. 12) is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device (network printer a-c, fig. 1).

Regarding claim 18, Okutsu futher discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein the instruction is accepted via a user interface unit including a display unit used for said image output device, wherein said controller inhibits the execution (output

impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) of the allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling a display of said display unit so as not to accept the instruction (fig. 16), when same output medium is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

Regarding claims 19-20, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an original image reading unit (CCD 20, fig. 2).

Regarding claim 21, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an obtaining unit (obtaining information of different apparatuses connected via a network, figs. 5, 7, and 11) adapted to obtain information of the other image output devices, and wherein said controller discriminates the output medium using the information obtained by said obtaining unit.

Regarding claim 22, Kayano discloses an image output system (fig. 4) comprising:

- plural image output devices (copy machines 1-3, fig. 4);
- each of said plural image output devices comprising:
 - a memory unit (image memory unit C, fig. 2) adapted to store a plurality of data;
 - a printer unit (laser printing unit 25, fig. 1) adapted to perform print processing of data stored in said memory unit to an output medium;
 - an acceptor (control panel, fig. 3) adapted to accept an instruction for causing a local device and another image output device to start a cascade printing operation (cascade mode, col. 4, lines 45-56) that print processing of a series of data is able to allot to said local device and said other image output device (col. 4, lines 45-60 and col. 5, lines 58-67), from a user; and
 - a controller (control unit 26, fig. 1, col. 4, lines 45-67) to permit an execution of the cascade printing operation in said local device and said other image output device (master

machine 1 and other slave machines 2-3, fig. 4, col. 7, lines 13-67), according to the instruction from the user, when the same output medium (media output size, fig. 5 & 11, col. 7, lines 50 to col. 8, lines 20) is set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

However, Kayano fails to teach and/or suggest a controller inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in each of said local device and said other image output device, before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

Okutsu, in the same field of endeavor for cascade printing operation (image output system), teaches a controller inhibits an execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67 and fig. 16) of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in each of said local device and said other image output device (printers a-c, fig. 1), before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify image output device of Kayano to include a controller for inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in said local device and other image output device as taught by Okutsu because of a following reason: (●) to ensure entire print job will be printed on the same output medium for output quality enhancement.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to combine Kayano with Okutsu to obtain the invention as specified in claim 22.

Regarding claim 23, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein said controller inhibits (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) said execution of said allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling beforehand said acceptor so as not to accept the instruction from the user, when the same

output medium of the same size (different print medias size, fig. 12) is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device (network printer a-c, fig. 1).

Regarding claim 24, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein the instruction is accepted via a user interface unit including a display unit used for said image output device, wherein said controller inhibits the execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different in size, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) of the allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling a display of said display unit so as not to accept the instruction (fig. 16), when same output medium of the same size is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

Regarding claims 25-26, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an original image reading unit (CCD 20, fig. 2).

Regarding claim 27, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an obtaining unit (obtaining information of different apparatuses connected via a network, figs. 5, 7, and 11) adapted to obtain information of the other image output devices, and wherein said controller discriminates the output medium of the same size using the information obtained by said obtaining unit.

Regarding claim 28, Kayano discloses an image output system (fig. 4) comprising:

- plural image output devices (copy machines 1-3, fig. 4);
- each of said plural image output devices comprising:
 - a memory unit (image memory unit C, fig. 2) adapted to store a plurality of data;
 - a printer unit (laser printing unit 25, fig. 1) adapted to perform print processing of data stored in said memory unit to an output medium;

- an acceptor (control panel, fig. 3) adapted to accept an instruction for causing a local device and another image output device to start a cascade printing operation (cascade mode, col. 4, lines 45-56) that print processing of a series of data is able to allot to said local device and said other image output device (col. 4, lines 45-60 and col. 5, lines 58-67), from a user; and
- a controller (control unit 26, fig. 1, col. 4, lines 45-67) to permit an execution of the cascade printing operation in said local device and said other image output device (master machine 1 and other slave machines 2-3, fig. 4, col. 7, lines 13-67), according to the instruction from the user, when the same type (media output size, fig. 5 & 11, col. 7, lines 50 to col. 8, lines 20) is set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

However, Kayano fails to teach and/or suggest a controller inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different type in each of said local device and said other image output device, before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

Okutsu, in the same field of endeavor for cascade printing operation (image output system), teaches a controller inhibits an execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67 and fig. 16) of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in each of said local device and said other image output device (printers a-c, fig. 1), before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify image output device of Kayano to include a controller for inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in said local device and other image output device as taught by Okutsu because of a following reason: (•) to ensure entire print job will be printed on the same output medium for output quality enhancement.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to combine Kayano with Okutsu to obtain the invention as specified in claim 28.

Regarding claim 29, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein said controller inhibits (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) said execution of said allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling beforehand said acceptor so as not to accept the instruction from the user, when the same output medium of the same type (different print medias type, fig. 12) is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device (network printer a-c, fig. 1).

Regarding claim 30, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein the instruction is accepted via a user interface unit including a display unit used for said image output device, wherein said controller inhibits the execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different in size/type, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) of the allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling a display of said display unit so as not to accept the instruction (fig. 16), when same output medium of the same type is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

Regarding claims 31-32, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an original image reading unit (CCD 20, fig. 2).

Regarding claim 33, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an obtaining unit (obtaining information of different apparatuses connected via a network, figs. 5, 7, and 11) adapted to obtain information of the other image output devices, and wherein said controller discriminates the output medium of the same size using the information obtained by said obtaining unit.

Regarding claim 34, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 28, wherein the type of the output medium is one of ordinary paper, card, thin paper, OHP and color sheet (color sheet, fig. 7a).

Regarding claim 35, Kayano discloses an image output system (fig. 4) comprising:

- plural image output devices (copy machines 1-3, fig. 4);
- each of said plural image output devices comprising:
- a memory unit (image memory unit C, fig. 2) adapted to store a plurality of data;
- a printer unit (laser printing unit 25, fig. 1) adapted to perform print processing of data stored in said memory unit to an output medium;
- an acceptor (control panel, fig. 3) adapted to accept an instruction for causing a local device and another image output device to start a cascade printing operation (cascade mode, col. 4, lines 45-56) that print processing of a series of data is able to allot to said local device and said other image output device (col. 4, lines 45-60 and col. 5, lines 58-67), from a user; and
- a controller (control unit 26, fig. 1, col. 4, lines 45-67) to permit an execution of the cascade printing operation in said local device and said other image output device (master machine 1 and other slave machines 2-3, fig. 4, col. 7, lines 13-67), according to the instruction from the user, when the same size and type (media output size/type, fig. 5 & 11, col. 7, lines 50 to col. 8, lines 20) is set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

However, Kayano fails to teach and/or suggest a controller inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different size/type in each of said local device and said other image output device, before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

Okutsu, in the same field of endeavor for cascade printing operation (image output system), teaches a controller inhibits an execution (output impossibility flag if two

output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67 and fig. 16) of the cascade printing operation that uses a different size/type in each of said local device and said other image output device (printers a-c, fig. 1), before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify image output device of Kayano to include a controller for inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium of size/type in said local device and other image output device as taught by Okutsu because of a following reason: (•) to ensure entire print job will be printed on the same output medium for output quality enhancement.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to combine Kayano with Okutsu to obtain the invention as specified in claim 28.

Regarding claim 36, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein said controller inhibits (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) said execution of said allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling beforehand said acceptor so as not to accept the instruction from the user, when the same output medium of the same type (different print medias type/size, fig. 12) is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device (network printer a-c, fig. 1).

Regarding claim 37, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein the instruction is accepted via a user interface unit including a display unit used for said image output device, wherein said controller inhibits the execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different in size/type, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) of the allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling a display of said display unit so as not to accept the instruction (fig. 16), when same output medium of the same type/size is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

Regarding claims 38-39, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an original image reading unit (CCD 20, fig. 2).

Regarding claim 40, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an obtaining unit (obtaining information of different apparatuses connected via a network, figs. 5, 7, and 11) adapted to obtain information of the other image output devices, and wherein said controller discriminates the output medium of the same size/type using the information obtained by said obtaining unit.

Regarding claim 41, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 28, wherein the type of the output medium is one of ordinary paper, card, thin paper, OHP and color sheet (color sheet, fig. 7a).

Regarding claim 42, Kayano discloses an image output system (fig. 4) comprising:

- plural image output devices (copy machines 1-3, fig. 4);
- each of said plural image output devices comprising:
 - a memory unit (image memory unit C, fig. 2) adapted to store a plurality of data;
 - a printer unit (laser printing unit 25, fig. 1) adapted to perform print processing of data stored in said memory unit to an output medium;
 - an acceptor (control panel, fig. 3) adapted to accept an instruction for causing a local device and another image output device to start a cascade printing operation (cascade mode, col. 4, lines 45-56) that print processing of a series of data is able to allot to said local device and said other image output device (col. 4, lines 45-60 and col. 5, lines 58-67), from a user; and
 - a controller (control unit 26, fig. 1, col. 4, lines 45-67) to permit an execution of the cascade printing operation in said local device and said other image output device (master

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machine 1 and other slave machines 2-3, fig. 4, col. 7, lines 13-67), according to the instruction from the user, when the same size and type (media output size/type, fig. 5 & 11, col. 7, lines 50 to col. 8, lines 20) is set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

However, Kayano fails to teach and/or suggest a controller inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different size/type in each of said local device and said other image output device, before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

Okutsu, in the same field of endeavor for cascade printing operation (image output system), teaches a controller inhibits an execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67 and fig. 16) of the cascade printing operation that uses a different resource in each of said local device and said other image output device (printers a-c, fig. 1), before the instruction from the user is accepted, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and said other image output device.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify image output device of Kayano to include a controller for inhibits an execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different resource in said local device and other image output device as taught by Okutsu because of a following reason: (•) to ensure entire print job will be printed on the same output medium for output quality enhancement.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to combine Kayano with Okutsu to obtain the invention as specified in claim 42.

Regarding claim 43, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein said controller inhibits (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) said execution of said allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling beforehand said acceptor so as not to accept the instruction from the user, when certain

resources (different print medias type/size, fig. 12) is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device (network printer a-c, fig. 1).

Regarding claim 44, Okutsu further discloses a system according to claim 16, wherein the instruction is accepted via a user interface unit including a display unit used for said image output device, wherein said controller inhibits the execution (output impossibility flag if two output print medias are different in size/type, fig. 12, col. 6, lines 52-67 and col. 7, lines 3-67) of the allotted printing operation before the instruction from the user is accepted, by controlling a display of said display unit so as not to accept the instruction (fig. 16), when same output medium of the same type/size is not set in both of said local device and said other image output device.

Regarding claims 45-46, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an original image reading unit (CCD 20, fig. 2).

Regarding claim 47, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 16, wherein each of said plural image output devices includes an obtaining unit (obtaining information of different apparatuses connected via a network, figs. 5, 7, and 11) adapted to obtain information of the other image output devices, and wherein said controller discriminates the output medium of the same size/type using the information obtained by said obtaining unit.

Regarding claims 48-51, Kayano further teaches a system according to claim 42, wherein said controller permits execution of the cascade printing operation in said local device and said other output device, according to the instruction from the user, when the same output medium is set in both of said local device and said other image output device, wherein said controller inhibits the execution of the cascade printing operation that uses a different output medium in each of said local device and said other image output device, before the instruction from the user is accepted, even if said other image

output devices has the same function as the function which includes at least one of a sort function and a double-side printing function (fig. 3) that said local device has, when the same output medium is not set in both said local device and other image output device.

Regarding claims 16-51: Claims 16-51 are the method claims corresponding to the apparatus claims 52-97 (respectively). The method claims are included by the operation of the apparatus claims. Please see claims rejection basis/rationale as described in claims 16-51 above.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments, see pages 37-39, filed on 9/12/05, with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 1-15 and 16-97 under 102(e) and 103(a) respectively have been fully considered and are persuasive. Therefore, the rejection has been withdrawn. However, upon further consideration, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of newly found prior art references.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- JP 07095334 to Takahashi et al, teaches a cascade image output system.
- US 6031631 to Tahara et al, teaches a cascade image output system.
- US 5909602 to Nakai et al, teaches a cascade image output system.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Thierry L. Pham whose telephone number is (571) 272-7439. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (9:30 AM - 6:00 PM).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David K. Moore can be reached on (571)272-7437. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Thierry L. Pham



GABRIEL GARCIA
PRIMARY EXAMINER